

being flayed. 'Quel fleau pour la poesie qu'un
 geometre!' as Madame Dacier feelingly observed. I retain
 a prejudice for looking at pictures not too much through
 micro-
 scopes, and a suspicion that, except where
 the lapse of
 years has brought obscurity, a message that
 needs much
 explaining seldom merits it. This is no very
 eccentric
 view. Surely Keats felt the same when he
 made his
 exclamation that 'Philosophy would pluck an
 angel's
 wing'; and Goethe, when he observed: *One
 must ask
 children and birds how cherries and
 strawberries taste.'
 True, they cannot tell one, ask as one will,
 since their
 tongues are more for taste than speech; and
 certainly
 there are sophisticated tastes also, which can
 only be
 painfully acquired, and are worth acquiring
 even pain-
 fully; but we are too prone to assume that we
 necessarily
 add cubits to the stature of our artistic
 appreciation by
 taking great thought about it. In literature
 (and through-
 out I am speaking only of that and of no
 other arts—
 I know too litde of the rest) there are
 heavens, I believe,
 'only to be entered by those who can retain
 or recapture
 the fresh simplicity of youth.

Nor is the objection simply to overmuch
 anatomy and
 introspection in reading literature or seeing
 drama; too
 much criticism seems to me to lead also to
 a certain
 dulling of real sensitiveness in another way
 as well. For
 it is not the most sensitive who chatter most
 about their

artistic sensations. There is such a thing as
reticence,
'What is set out for show, is half sold/ Here,
too, it is apt
to be the Regans and Gonerils who talk
most glibly.
That, at least, is my own conclusion, after
years of
lecturing: there are feelings one does not
want to publish,
feelings that one has blunted by doing so.
And, above
all, these stupid controversies about the
merits of authors
(as if such things could possibly be proved)
lead only to